



Everything was ready—the tea-kettle of hot water, the ax, the block: and miles away the Doctor was plodding through the snow. Would he get there in time?

departure, and as he was in desperate pain, and as—

But Terry Lute would not have his finger off. From the corner, where he stood at bay, roaring in a way to silence the very gale that had now begun to shake the cottage, he ran to his mother's knee. And there he sobbed his complaint.

"Ah, Terry, lad," his father pleaded, "'tis only a finger!"

"'Tis on my left hand!"

"You're not left-handed, son," Tom Lute argued patiently. "You've no real need o' four fingers there. Why, sonny boy, once I knowed a man—"

"'Tis one o' my fiddle fingers."

Tom Lute sighed.

"Fiddle fingers, son!" said he. "Ah, now, boy! You've said that so often, an' so foolishly, that I—"

"I'll not have it off!"

"But—"

"Isn't no use in havin' it off," Terry complained, "an' I can't spare it. This here boil—"

"'Tisn't a boil, son; 'tis mortification."

"'Tis not mortification."

Again Tom sighed.

"Is you afeared, Terry?" said he.

"Surely you isn't a pulin' little coward, is you? A finger! 'Tis such a simple little thing t' suffer—"

"I'm not afeared, neither!"

"Well, then—"

"You may cut any finger you likes off my right hand," Terry boasted, "an' I'll not whimper a peep."

"I don't want a finger off your right hand, Terry."

"I won't have it!"

"'Tis no pleasure t' me t'—"

"I won't have a finger off my left hand!"

"I tells you, Terry, you isn't left-handed. I've told you that a thousand times. What in the name o'—"

"I tells you, I won't have it!"

BLACK Walt Anderson looked to Tom Lute for a signal. Sandy Lands rose. "Now?" he seemed to inquire.

Tom Lute shook his head.

"That's the way we done aboard the *Royal Bloodhound*," the Little Fiddler's grandfather put in.

He began to pace the floor. The tap-tap of his wooden leg was furious and his voice was as gusty as the gale outside.

"Now, you mark me!" he ran on. "We chopped Cap'n Sam Small's foot off with a ax an' plugged it with b'ilin' tar. 'Twas

mortification. I knows mortification when I sees it. An' Sam Small got well."

He was bawling, by this time, like a skipper in a gale—being deaf, the old man was accustomed to raise his voice, in a gradual *crescendo*, until he had come as near hearing himself as possible.

"Yes, sir—you mark me! That's what we done aboard the *Royal Bloodhound* the year I shipped for the seals along o' Small Sam Small. We chopped it clean off with a meat ax an' plugged it with b'ilin' tar. If Small Sam Small had clung t' that member for another day he would have died. Mark me! Small Sam Small would have been dropped over the side o' the *Royal Bloodhound* an' left t' shift for hisself in a sack an' a Union Jack!"

HE paused before Terry Lute and shook a lean finger under the boy's nose.

"Now," he roared, "you mark me!"

"I isn't aboard the *Royal Bloodhound*!" Terry sobbed.

"Ah, Terry!" This was Terry's mother. She was crying bitterly. "You'll die an you don't have that finger off!"

"I'll die an I got to!"

"Oh, Terry, Terry!"

"I isn't afeared t' die."

"Ah, Terry dear, whatever would I do—"

"I'll die afore I gives up one o' my fiddle fingers."

"But you isn't got—"

"Never you mind about that!"

"If you had—"

"You jus' wait till I grows up!"

Again Sandy Lands inquired for the signal. Tom Lute lifted a hand to forbid.

"Terry, son," said he gravely, "once an' for all, now, will you—"

"No!" Terry roared.

"Oh, oh, Terry, dear!" the mother wailed, observing the preparations behind Terry's back. "If you'd only—"

Terry screamed in a furious passion: "Have done, woman! I tells you, I won't have none o' my fiddle fingers cut off!"

It was the end. Tom Lute gave the signal. Sandy Lands and Black Walt Anderson pounced upon little Terry Lute and carried him, bawling and struggling, from his mother's knee toward the block. Tom Lute stood waiting there with the ax. As for Terry Lute's mother, she flew to the stove, tears streaming from her eyes, her mouth grim, and fetched the pot of tar. And then all at once the Little Fiddler of Amen Island wriggled out of

the clutches of his captors—they were too tender with him—and dived under the kitchen table.

CONFRONTING

the slush of Deep Water Cove, with the finger of the Little Fiddler of Amen Island awaiting his ministration beyond, Doctor Rolfe had misled Skipper James Cull into the assumption of his acquiescence. It was not in his mind to return to Candlestick Cove that night: it was in his mind to gain the shore and proceed upon his professional call. And there was reason in this. For when the group of arctic ice—still rhythmically swinging in and out with the great seas from the open—drove down upon the broken base of Deep Water Cliff, it compressed the ice between. At the moment of greatest compression the slush was reasonably solid ground. When the arctic ice subsided with the wave, the slush expanded in the

the stuff underfoot—the treacherous insecurity of it—drove him. The shore was close. He was too eager for the shore—he ran too far; and his foot went down again—foot and leg to the thigh. As instinctively he tried violently to extract the leg by stepping up on the other foot—that leg went down to the knee. A fall to the arm-pits impended—a drop clean through and overhead. The drop would inevitably be the result of a flash of hesitation. Doctor Rolfe cried out. And as he cried he plunged forward—a swift, conscious effort to fall prone on his gaff.

There was a blank. Nothing seemed to happen. He was amazed to discover that the gaff upheld him. It occurred to him, then, that his feet were trapped—that he could not withdraw his legs from the sucking slush. Nor could he. They were caught. And he perceived that they were sinking deeper—that he was slowly slipping through the slush.

He was conscious of the night—the dark and snow and wind; and he fancied that he heard a voice of warning:

"Cotch hold—"

It was a voice.

"Cotch hold o' the gaff!"

Doctor Rolfe seized the end of Skipper James's gaff and drew himself out of the grip of the slush. When the sea came in again he jumped up and joined Skipper James on the broken base of Deep Water Cliff. He was breathing hard. He did not look back. Skipper James said that they had better make haste—that somebody would "cotch a death o' cold" if they did not make haste. And they made haste.

AN hour or more later, Doctor Rolfe, with Skipper James in his wake, thrust into Tom Lute's agitated kitchen and interrupted the amputation of the fiddle finger of the Little Fiddler of Amen Island with a "Well, well, well! What in the name of—" and stood staring—all dusted with snow and shivering and fairly gone purple with cold.

They had got Terry Lute cornered then—his back against the wall, his face horrified, his mouth wide open in a bellow of rage; and Sandy Lands and Black Walt Anderson were almost upon him; and Tom Lute was grimly ready with the ax; and Terry Lute's mother was standing beside the round birch block with the pot of tar in her hands and her apron over her head.

Doctor Rolfe stood staring at all this—his mouth as wide open, because of a temporary paralysis due to his amazement, as Terry Lute's mouth was fallen in anger and terror. And it was not long after that—the Doctor being warm and dry then, and the kitchen quiet and expectant, and Tom Lute and Terry Lute's mother exhibiting relief and the keenest sort of interest—that the Doctor took Terry Lute's fiddle finger in his hand and began to prepare it for the healing thrust of a lance.

"I'm going to cure it, Terry," said he.

"That's good, sir. I'm wonderful glad t' save that finger."

"You cherish that finger, Terry?"

"I does that, sir! I've need of it, sir."

The Doctor was not attending. His attention was on the lance and its object.

"Mm-m," he ran on absently, to make distracting conversation. "You've need of it, eh?"

"'Tis one o' my fiddle fingers, sir."

"Mm-m? Ah! The Little Fiddler of Amen Island! Well, Terry, lad, you'll be able to play your fiddle again in a fortnight."

Terry grinned.

"No, sir," said he; "I won't be playin' my fiddle by that time."

The Doctor looked up in astonishment. "Yes, you will," he flashed sharply.

"No, sir."

"But I tell you—"

"I isn't got no fiddle."

"What!"

"All I got now," said the Little Fiddler of Amen Island, "is a jew's-harp. But jus' you wait till I grows up!"

wider space it was then permitted to occupy. A man could cross—a light, agile man, daring the depth of the slush, might be able to cross—when the slush was compressed. No man could run all the way across. It must be in two advances. Midway he would be caught by the subsidence of the wave. From this he must preserve himself. And from this—from dropping through the field of slush and having it close over his head—he might preserve himself by means of his gaff.

"We-ell," Doctor Rolfe had admitted, apparently resigned, "no doubt you're right, Skipper James. I—"

Now the arctic ice was poised.

"Ay, sir. An' you're more reasonable than ever I knowed you t'—"

A sea was rolling in.

"We-ell," the Doctor drawled, "as I grow older—"

Then came the moment of advantage. Doctor Rolfe ran out on the slush before Skipper James could reach out a hand to restrain him. It was indiscreet. Doctor Rolfe had been too eager to escape—he had started too soon. The sea was not down—the slush was not squeezed tight. A foot sank to the ankle. Doctor Rolfe jerked it out. The other foot went down to the calf of the leg. Doctor Rolfe jerked it—tugged it. It was fast. The slush, in increasing compression, had caught it. He must wait for the wave to subside. His flesh crept with the horror of the thing. He was trapped—caught fast! A moment later the sea was in retreat from the cliff and the slush began to thin.

DOCTOR ROLFE employed the stratagem that is familiar to the coast for dealing with such ice as the slush in which he was entrapped. He waited—alert. There would come a moment when the consistency of the ice would be so thin that he would drop through. Precisely before that moment—when his feet were first free—he dropped flat on his gaff. Having in this way distributed his weight, he avoided its concentration on a small area,—he was borne up; and he withdrew his feet and waited for the sea to fall in again and compress the ice.

When the next wave fell in, Skipper James started across the ice like a bobcat.

Doctor Rolfe lay inert through two waves. When the third fell, he jumped up and ran toward the base of Deep Water Cliff. Again the sea caught him unaware. His flesh was creeping again. Horror of